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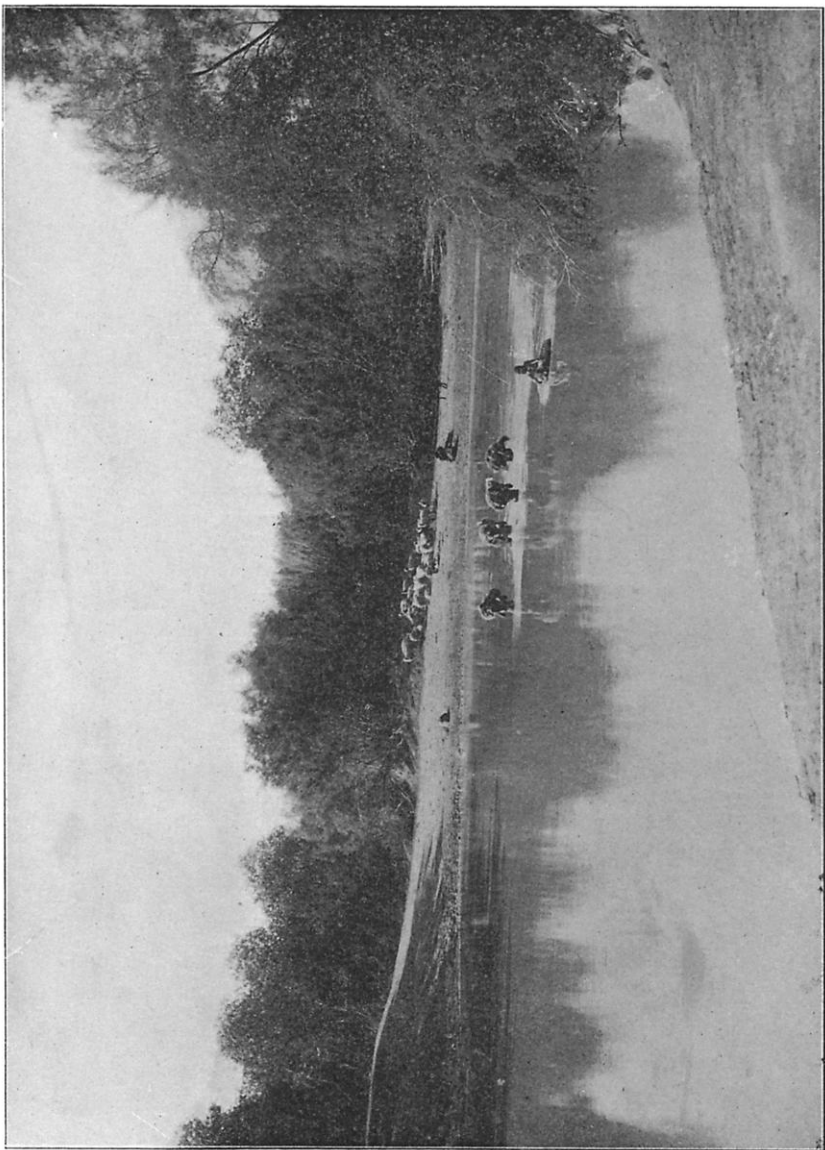
THE UPPER JORDAN VALLEY

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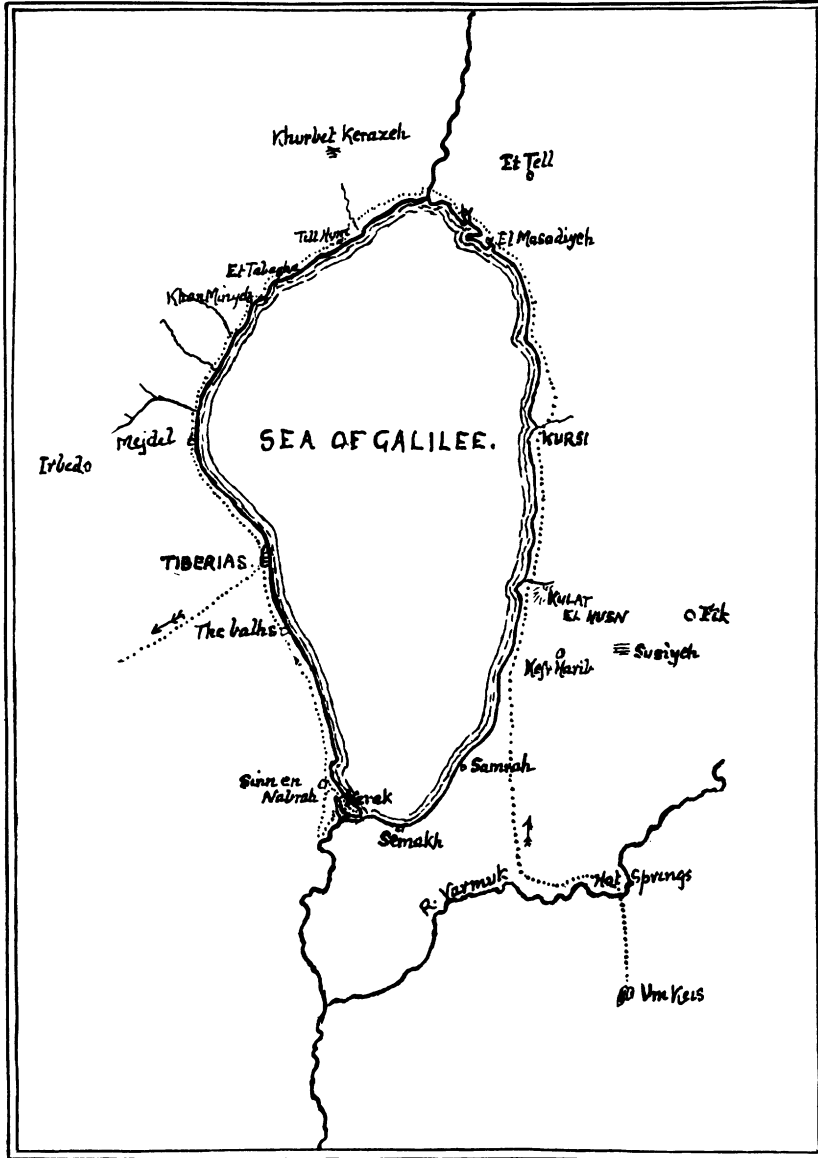
The Talmud, as has been mentioned, divides Galilee into the "Upper" the "Lower," and the "Valley." This last section, comprising the Upper Jordan Valley and the two lakes, is a district of great importance to Galilee though by no means always included politically within it. It was always a valuable frontier to the mountain region and when belonging to the mountaineers must, with its abundant water supplies and rich verdure, have been a cherished possession. Much that has been already said about Gennesaret will apply to a large part of the Upper Jordan region. Although it is rightly described as part of Galilee, the upper portion would appear, before the time of Herod, to have been looked upon as a separate district, wild and unsubdued, in the marshes of which robbers found a refuge.¹

It is the Jordan and its tributaries which give the distinctive character to this region. Two of the sources of the Jordan must be considered as rising outside of Palestine proper. Of these the more northerly source is the picturesque 'Ain Fuwwâr, below Hasbayeh, in which the water bubbles up in a little pool and, descending under the name Nahr Hasbani, turns the Wady el Teim into a paradise of verdure. Below this oasis the river has cut for some miles a deep channel southward through a mass of lava. At the well-known bridge on the road to Banias the stream may be seen running upon a bed of limestone, having in the course of ages cut its bed through the whole thickness of the volcanic rock. The second of the northerly sources of the Jordan is the little Nahr Bareight which drains the fertile Merj 'Ayûn—the "Meadow of Springs"—known to us in the Bible (I Kings 15:20; II Kings 25:29; II Chron. 16:4) as Ijon. The water arises in two large fountains and, being much used for irrigation, it is only a small stream that finally descends by a series of

¹ Josephus, *B. J.*, I, xvi, 5.



SHEPHERDS FORDING THE JORDAN



cascades past M'utelleh and the great Tell Ābel (Abel-beth-Maacah mentioned with Ijon in the above references), and finally with contributions from streamlets further south, joins the Hasbani about a mile north of where this stream loses itself in the true Jordan.

The most impressive sources of the Jordan are the two southerly ones at Banias and Tell el Kādi respectively. At the former site, 1,080 feet above sea level, the ice-cold water bursts forth a full-fledged river from the vast accumulation produced by the collapse of the roof of a once sacred cave. The water tumbles and rushes amid the ruins of once splendid Caesarea Philippi and waters a corner of Palestine even today, in its neglect, unequaled in its picturesque beauty and its handsome timbered glades. Here was once the shrine of Pan, hence the name Panias. By Cleopatra it was rented to the robber chieftain Zenodorus and in 20 B. C. came into the hands of Herod the Great; by Herod Philip it was named Caesarea Philippi and by Herod Agrippa II, after entertaining here in pleasure and cruel sports the conqueror of his people, it was called in flattery of another Caesar Neronias; all these names are now forgotten locally while the shrine of Pan is by its inhabitants, who cannot pronounce P, today called Banias. "Everywhere," writes Tristram,² "there is a wild medley of cascades, mulberry trees, fig trees, clashing torrents, festoons of vines, bubbling fountains, reeds and ruins, and the mingled music of birds and waters." The source at Tell ab Kadi (500 feet above sea level) is in many respects a contrast to all this. Here the waters quietly bubble up, in volume much greater than at Banias, from the western end of a great *tell*. Part unite to form a pool to the west, but the larger volume descends as a quiet millstream past one of the most impressive "groves" in the land. Nowhere can one more strongly realize the mysterious influence of a sacred grove than when standing beneath the vast terebinth and oak which here shadow a sacred moslem tomb. This great *tell* is probably the site of Dan, for Kady (Arabic) and Dan (Hebrew) both mean "judge;" the name too of the river which here arises, el Leddan, appears to harbor an echo of the ancient name. In the time of Josephus³ the spot was apparently known as Daphne, where was, he says, the temple of the golden calf.

² *Land of Israel*, p. 586.

³ *B. J.*, IV, i, 1.

The two rivers, the Nahr Baniās and the Nahr el Leddan, run southward, independently, for some five or six miles and then join to make one stream.

Besides these four main streams, a great many rivulets burst up from the basalt along the whole northern extremity of the valley. These, together with the numerous irrigation canals, make the center of this district a scene of running waters and flooded fields in which are cultivated quantities of rice, maize (Indian corn), and cotton.

During the past decade or two there has been a marked increase in cultivation here and by means of irrigation canals fruitful areas like those around Zuk el Tahta and el Khalisah have been converted into acres of beautiful gardens. Here and elsewhere there are large clumps of beautiful silver poplars—the growth of which as timber is a profitable industry, as well as orchards of fruit trees. What has been done is but a fraction of what might be accomplished under more careful husbandry. As it is, the larger part of the great fertile plain between the Jordan sources and the Huleh marshes is given over to Bedawin who, besides the crops mentioned, raise quantities of barley, durra (Egyptian maize), and sesame (oil-seed). Recently the plain north of the Huleh has been extensively drained and converted from marsh to pasture land through the artificial lowering of the Jordan bed below the Huleh Lake⁴ and there are now many hundred acres of more useful land than, say, forty years ago, when “Rob Roy” MacGregor made his famous journey there. A number of little villages are dotted over the plain, and near the northern end, besides many mills, there rises, half hidden in trees, the large mansion which the sheikh of the Fadl tribe has recently built as his residence.

At intervals along the long line of the Western Galilean Mountains copious fountains give rise to streams for further irrigation of the plain. Near these spots are to be found at various seasons the encampments of the Ghawārīneh Bedawin with their flocks of buffaloes, cattle, and goats. Never were creatures more adapted to their environment than these buffaloes who on hot days lie almost entirely submerged in the cool running waters or the marshy pools, in marked contrast to their cousins, the cows, who stand in the broiling

⁴ This work has been done by the managers of the Jiflik—the sultan's private property.

sunshine but knee-deep in the cool waters. These Arabs make great quantities of mats out of the papyrus reeds from the neighboring swamp where flourishes the greatest solid mass of papyrus in the world. The men gather the reeds and split them into flat bands which the women and girls weave on very primitive looms. Of these mats the people make their houses and they dispose of great numbers as floor-mats to the fellahin of the mountains.

‘Ain el Mellahah is the largest of these springs; its waters rise in a large fish-filled pool and, after working several mills, enter the Huleh as a stream of considerable volume. Towering immediately above this great source is the lofty hill of Harrāweh which, from both its conspicuous position and its extensive ruins, must have been once a place of great importance and is very generally considered to be the site of Hazor.⁵ An ancient highroad skirts the foot of these western hills, running from fountain to fountain, and at several spots along this route may still be seen sacred groves of terebinths where the superstitious come for cure of disease, or deposit, in the guardianship of the “spirit of the grove,” brushwood, bundles of papyrus, or plows, well knowing that no one will dare violate the shrine.

Lake Huleh itself is a shallow expanse of water $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long by 3 miles wide; its bottom is covered thick with water weeds whose swaying branches lie almost everywhere just below the surface, while at many spots the yellow, and here and there the white, water lily adorn the muddy waters. Fish abound; the catfish and the *musht* are caught in quantities both by the cast net from the shore and from boats by means of the *m'batten*. Among the many birds found here, the beautiful white pelican is particularly conspicuous; when on the wing it is a strikingly noble bird. The shores on the east or west sides of this triangular sheet of water are, except after heavy rain, fairly firm; on the west, rich wheat land⁶ comes close up to the beach though standing some six feet above it. Along the northern edge of the open water there floats a dense mass of papyrus—some 6 miles long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles broad—supporting in its interstices

⁵ See Josephus, *Ant.*, V, v, 1.

⁶ Rabbi Schwarz says, “this lake is called by the Arabs Bahr Chit, ‘wheat sea,’ because much wheat is sown in the neighborhood,” p. 47. This name I have never heard; it is I think a confusion with the name Ard el Khait.

many smaller plants. The Jordan, which loses itself at the northern extremity of this mass of floating vegetation, reaches the lake along a narrow winding open channel. When rowing here in a clumsy fishing-boat a few months ago I was unable to ascend this channel more than a hundred yards, but "Rob Roy" MacGregor⁷ in his slender canoe threaded the narrow passage a distance which he calculates was three miles. Whether the channel is today as it was then—40 years ago—is a question which it needs another adventurous canoeist to decide. My impression is that the present channel very rapidly narrows, then disappears as a single open channel. We did not find the papyrus reeds as high as he described them—15 to 20 feet; the average height, after carefully measuring many specimens, was about 8 to 10 feet. The fishermen are, we learned, accustomed from time to time to burn the reeds to restrain their advancing growth, and this may account for their smaller size.

On the western shore of the Huleh is the Jewish colony of Jessod Hamaalah, generally known as Ezbaid, from the Arabic name of the district. Here may be seen hundreds of beautiful eucalypti growing in their greatest perfection with massive trunks and lofty spreading branches. The colonists are not as prosperous as they deserve to be because of a malignant form of malaria and, that scourge of Africa, blackwater fever, which are both endemic here. There is no doubt that more might be done than has yet been attempted to improve the sanitary condition. The extensive gardens and plantations are today in a condition less flourishing than some years ago when the settlers received more outside assistance. Just south of el Ezbaid is the squalid village of el Teleil, supposed by some to be the Thella mentioned by Josephus⁸ as the eastern boundary of Galilee. Around this place are encamped numbers of pseudo-bedawin, some of whom are descendants of Kurds who settled there a century or more ago. The whole plain west of el Huleh, known as Ard el Kheit, is one of marvelous agricultural richness and in the spring there are miles of waving grain.

Lake Huleh, the Lake Samachonitis of Josephus, has been popularly identified with the Waters of Meron of Josh. 9:5-7. It is an identification which rests on but little probability. The expression "waters" (נָחַל) is an unusual one for any lake-like expanse and there

⁷ See *Rob Roy on the Jordan*.

⁸ *B. J.*, III, iii, 1.

is no trace of a survival of the name Meron in the immediate neighborhood. An echo of the name does, however, appear to remain in Meron and Marûn er Râs, villages in Upper Galilee. The district of Meron may have been there and the "waters" may have been the name of some springs within that area. The modern name Huleh may with probability be traced back to Ulatha, a name given by Josephus to this very region. It was a division of the country by itself, associated with Panias, which belonged to the freebooter Zenodorus, but later to Herod the great.⁹ On the shores of the Huleh (Samachonitis) was a town called Seleucia which was on the border of Agrippa's kingdom.¹⁰

The Huleh plain, which is bounded on the west, north, and east by high mountains, is even to the south very definitely limited by a number of low volcanic hills which appear from a distance to convert it into a closed basin. However, the Jordan has, here, as farther north, managed to cut for itself a deep channel through the obstruction. For the first two miles the descent is gradual and the sluggish stream peacefully winds through meadow lands, until it reaches the Jisr Benât Yacob. This mediaeval bridge probably derives its name, "the bridge of the daughters of Jacob," not from any association with the patriarch, but from a connection which it had in crusading times with a nunnery of St. James (who is called in Arabic Yacûb), the tolls on this bridge having been given to the nunnery.¹¹ Just below the bridge where there is a ruin on a low hill known today as Kusr 'Atra—the remains of the Chateau Neuf of the Crusaders—the river commences its rapid plunge downward. For some six or seven miles the river rages and tumbles in a bed deep cut in the lava until as the Bataihah is approached its waters are diverted to many mill streams and thence the much impoverished main stream makes a quiet passage seaward through low banks of alluvial deposit overhung at many spots by beautiful trees. In the twelve miles of river between the two lakes the total fall is 689 feet,

⁹ *Ant.*, XV, x, 2.

¹⁰ *B. J.*, IV, i, 1. Schumacher would identify Selukîyeh, a place seven miles to the southeast of the lake, with Seleucia, but this is opposed to the statement of Josephus. See "The Jaulan," p. 257.

¹¹ See *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1898, p. 29.

an average descent of 57 feet to the mile, but over the central section the rate of fall is very much greater. The Valley of the Jordan in this part is inhabited by a few bedawin who manage to avoid the taxes and escape the justice of the government by crossing to the east side when "wanted" by the governor of Safed, or to the west side when "wanted" by the Damascus authorities.

The Lake of Galilee is characterized by its rich alluvial plains to the north and south, the great prevalence of volcanic rocks near its shores, its own natural riches, and, more than all, by its historic associations. The two great alluvial plains at the northwest and northeast corners of the lake—el Ghuweir and el Bataihah—have already been described. At the southern end the old lacustrine deposits¹² present toward the present lake a line of low marly cliffs divided by the Jordan at its exit. On the western cliff, just above the lake, is el Kerak, once the site of the Tarichaea of Josephus; the eastern cliffs are surmounted by the village of es Semakh, a place which has recently sprung into notice through its railway station. There is now a rough wooden pier for the convenience of passengers proceeding to Tiberias. There is a ford at the mouth of the Jordan and, when the water is raised by the spring floods, a ferry; but there must some day be a bridge here connecting Tiberias with the railway station. A little farther down, the shallow river eddies and swirls over the ruins of two ancient bridges. The hill of Kerak is almost an island, a backwater of the river half filling the deep trench which isolates it on the part not abutting on lake or river.

On the northern shore the lava reaches the lake wherever the level land is absent; on the east the cliffs are largely volcanic, overlying the limestone, and on the west the lava—part of the Hattin outflow—lies all along the summit of the limestone hills. Along the eastern side there is a plain—in places nearly a mile wide—between the mountains and the lakes; to the west the plain is narrower and reaches considerable breadth near Tiberias.

The lake is 13 miles long by 8 miles broad; its water is pure and limpid; storms are rare, but local squalls of considerable violence sometimes occur with extraordinary rapidity. Sailing on the lake

¹² That is, the sedimentary deposits laid down by the great lake which once filled this whole valley.

requires practical experience because of this and because the gusts of wind coming down the valley mouths strike the water in unexpected directions. There is a difference of from two to three feet in the level of the lake in the spring and autumn.¹³ Recently the phenomena known as "seiches," which have been studied with such detail on the Swiss and Scottish lakes, have been observed here.¹⁴ The rises appear to be about three an hour.

It is well known that this lake swarms with fish. In the Roman period there appear to have been many hundreds of fishing boats; today there are not much over a score. The richest fishing grounds are along the north shore from el Mejdal at the northwest corner to the northeast corner. The neighborhood of the ingress of the Jordan is a good spot in every season, and in the early spring months fish swarm in the warm waters around et Tabighah. The most valuable fish are various kinds of *musht* (chromidae—allied to wrass); several varieties of carp and barbel (cyprinidae), and the curious catfish (clarias macracanthus) known to the fishermen as *barbût*. This last, though one of the most tasty of fresh-water fishes, is *tarîf* (unclean) for the Jews on account of its absence of scales (Lev. 11:10). Fish are occasionally caught with the hook and at times by means of poisoned bait, but for purposes of commerce only by nets. Three kinds of nets are used, the *shabakeh* or castnet, the *m'batten* or floating net, and the *jarf* or drag-net. The first of these is a circular net made in three sizes, the medium one, the most commonly used, having a circumferential spread of forty feet. The edges are weighted with small bars of lead and to the center is fixed a small cord. The fisherman gathers up the net by means of this cord and carefully twists it round his right arm; he then wades into the water cautiously and looks around him; as soon as he sees an indication of fish he skilfully flings forth his net so that it flies out and descends in a level circle upon the water; then, quickly falling, the weighted edges of the net inclose all the fish within them. The fisherman walks up to and over the net, beating it upon the bottom with his feet until the fishes are entangled in its meshes. He then carefully winds

¹³ See the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1905, p. 363.

¹⁴ A limnogram extending over ten hours, taken by the present writer at the Lake of Galilee, was recently exhibited by Professor Chrystal in a lecture at the Royal Institution of Great Britain as a fine example of a seiche.

it up, commencing from the central cord, and, as he does so, carefully detaches the fish whose sharp spines have fixed them in the meshes. The *m'batten* is a net over six hundred feet long made in three layers, two outer ones of coarse mesh and a middle one of fine mesh, and floated by means of corks attached to one long side while lead weights are fixed to the other. The net is laid in a long line parallel to the shore—usually in the evening or night—and the fishermen then row between it and the shore to frighten the fish, which swim precipitately against the net and are entangled in its meshes. When, through the sinking of the corks it is evident that there is a large catch, the net is gathered into the two boats in attendance.

The *jarf*, double the length of the last mentioned, is of fine mesh in a single layer. It is paid out from the beach in an immense semi-circle and in position is rapidly dragged in by the fishermen standing on the shore. In this net the fishes—of all sorts mixed together—are inclosed (cf. Matt. 13:47 f.).

The government tax on the fish caught is one-tenth; this tax, like all Turkish taxes, is farmed out. The Ashshûr, or tax farmer, pays down a lump sum and himself collects his share of the fish from the fishermen.¹⁵

Around the shores of the lake are the sites of many famous towns. Near the entrance of the Jordan is et Tell, the site of Bethsaida. On the opposite side of the river, about two miles to the west, is Tell Hum, the ruin of Capernaum. Less than two miles to the north of this is Khurbet Kerâzeh, the site of Chorazin. At the northwest corner of the lake is el Mejdal, now but a squalid village, by tradition the site of Magdala. Hidden in the mountains farther west is Irbid, the ancient Arbela. Between el Mejdal and Tiberias lay Bethmaus,¹⁶ which may have occupied an isolated, ruin-crowned hill at the mouth of Wady abu el 'Amîs. Modern Tiberias occupies but a small area of the great Roman city which once flourished here. The ancient walls can still be traced, and included within them was the lofty hill to the southwest, then the Acropolis. Founded some five or six years before the ministry of Jesus, on a contaminated site, and populated by Antipas with all the

¹⁵ For a fuller account of "The Fisheries of Galilee" see paper by the present writer in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, January, 1908.

¹⁶ Josephus, *Vita*, 12.

riff-raff he could induce to go there, it was for years considered by the Jews an unclean city. Subsequently in the whirligig of time it became one of their most sacred cities, the seat of the Sanhedrin, and a great rabbinical school. Later it was a stronghold of militant Latin Christianity against the Saracen. Now it is a poor, squalid, but nevertheless "holy" city of the Jews—the last surviving "town" of this once densely populated lake shore. South of Tiberias, near the present hot baths,



EL MEJDEL, THE PROBABLE SITE OF MAGDALA

was probably the ancient Hammath (Josh. 19:35), and certainly the Emmaus of Josephus.¹⁷ At the southwest corner is a *tell* known as Sinn en Nabra which appears to be the site of Sinnabris; while upon the extensive level hill at the mouth of the Jordan known as el Kerak we must recognize the site of Tarichaea, a city greater than Tiberias itself, which at one time gave its name to the whole lake. Upon the lofty heights just south of the Hieromax (the modern Yarmuk) the great Greek city of Gadara (now the squalid village of M^cKeis) overlooked the lake and all its surroundings. Nearer the shore and half-way up the eastern

¹⁷ *Ant.*, XVIII, ii, 3; *B. J.*, IV, i, 3.

coast lay Gamala, built upon a strange camel-shaped hill known as Kulât el Husn, a place celebrated for its extraordinary natural strength and the bravery of its inhabitants.¹⁸ Somewhat inland from this hill, between it and the modern village of Fik (the Aphek of I Kings 20:26), is the shapeless ruin of Susîyeh, the Susitha (סוסיטה) of Talmudic writers¹⁹ and therefore the Hippos of Josephus, a Greek city which gave its name (Hippene) to the whole district.²⁰ Some two miles north of the Kulât el Husn the hills, which farther south are some distance from the shore, approach within 40 feet of the lake; and here, on the high ground, is the ruined site of Kersa, or, as Schumacher²¹ called it, Kurse, which certainly represents the ancient Gerasa, attached to which was the country of the Gerasenes²² (*R. V.*, Mark 5:1; Luke 8:25), where the incident of the swine occurred. Origen²³ states that a city of this name existed on the shores of the lake and that near it was a precipice down which the swine ran.

The circuit of the lake thus included in New Testament times a considerable variety of elements. There was the great Roman city of Tiberias, pagan and disreputable, yet for a time the capital of the district. On hill tops overlooking the lake were the free Greek cities of Gadara, Hippos, and (apparently) Gerasa, intensely anti-Jewish and hated in turn by the Jews. In the midst of gentile elements rose Tarachaea and Gamala, each destined shortly to be the scene of a bloody tragedy in the Jewish war of independence. Around two-thirds of the circumference memory calls back the sound of the clash of arms and discordant cries of the conquerors and the conquered, while in times of peace almost everywhere incense rises to heathen gods. Only upon the quiet, fertile, northern shore in the unfortified Jewish towns, within sight of the "kingdoms of this world and the glory of them," one must ever think of those quiet and beneficent labors of Him who from this one district gathered out a large proportion of those who are immortal as the ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

¹⁸ *B. J.*, I, iv, 8; and IV, chap. i.

¹⁹ *Bereshith Rabbah*, chaps. xxxi, xxxvii, etc.

²⁰ *B. J.*, III, iii, 1.

²¹ *The Jaulan*.

²² See art. on "Gerasenes" in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. Gerasa is there considered more probable than Gergesa.

²³ In *Ev. Joann.*, 6:24.